A SERMON

DELIVERED AT THE

DEDICATION

OF THE

NEW-MEETING-HOUSE

IN BELLINGHAM,

OCTOBER 27, 1802.

BY THOMAS BALDWIN A. M.

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The Committee, by order, and in behalf of the proprietors of the New-Meeting-Houſe in Bellingham return their thanks to the Rev. THOMAS BALDWIN, for his Sermon delivered this day at the Dedication of ſaid Meeting-Houſe, and requeſt a Copy thereof for the preſs.

Bellingham Oct. 27, 1802.

LABAN BATES,
ELIAB WIGHT,
SAM'L DARLING, Jun. } *Com.*

A SERMON.

II. CHRONICLES VI. 41.

"*Now therefore ariſe O* LORD GOD *into thy reſting-place; thou and the Ark of thy ſtrength: let thy prieſts O* LORD GOD *be clothed with ſalvation, and let thy ſaints rejoice in goodneſs.*"

THE worſhip of the Deity is co-exiſtent with creation itſelf. When the foundations of the earth were eſtabliſhed, and a compaſs ſet upon the face of the deep; when the wide heavens were ſtretched abroad adorned with all their ſhining beauties, "the morning ſtars ſang together and the ſons of GOD ſhouted for joy."

The Supreme Architect beheld with delightful approbation, the unnumbered worlds and beings he had formed, and received a juſt tribute of praiſe from them all. Can we ſuppoſe that man, the laſt and nobleſt work of creating wiſdom, could remain ſilent, while ſurrounding nature became vocal with the high praiſes of GOD? No, ſurely; for his heart was originally formed for devotion, and all the tuneful powers of his ſoul were in uniſon with the notes of Angels.

But the brief manner in which the hiſtory of our great Progenitor is handed down to us, does not furniſh us with a particular account, of the manner, in

which he worſhiped the DEITY in his tranſient ſtate of innocency.

Sacrificial worſhip was undoubtedly inſtituted immediately after the fall. It is thought probable, that the blood of thoſe beaſts with whoſe ſkins Adam and Eve were firſt clothed, was offered in ſacrifice as a typical expiation. The promiſe of a Saviour was already revealed, to calm their fears, and inſpire them with the hope of divine forgiveneſs. Through faith in this promiſed SEED, Abel offered an acceptable ſacrifice to GOD.

Although there were many who worſhipped the true GOD from this period through the whole ſeries of the Patriarchal diſpenſation, down to Moſes; it does not appear, that any particular places were built or conſecrated for divine worſhip.

"In the days of Enos," it is ſaid that "men began to call on GOD." This is perhaps the firſt intimation which we meet with in the ſacred hiſtory, of ſocial worſhip; yet we think it uncertain, whether they aſſembled at this time, in any larger bodies, than could be accommodated in the tent of ſome pious Patriarch.

I am not inſenſible, my brethren, that the *cuſtom of dedicating* temples and other places for public worſhip, is ſuppoſed by ſome, to have been derived from the idolatrous Pagans. But I very much ſcruple, whether among all the Writers of heathen Mythology, there can be an inſtance found of a pagan temple, until after Moſes erected the tabernacle in the wilderneſs.

Idolatry took its riſe among the Phenecians not long after the deluge, and from them it was communicated to the Egyptians. Yet it appears evident, that the Egyptians had no temples in the time of Moſes, or he would undoubtedly have mentioned them.

Hence I think we may fairly conclude, that the *Jewiſh tabernacle* was the firſt public edifice, ever erected for the worſhip of the ſupreme JEHOVAH. It is moſt likely the Pagans took their models from this, as it is certain they had alſo their ſacred *cheſts* in imitation of the ark.*

This Tabernacle was a kind of portable temple, the model of which was deviſed by GOD himſelf. It was by ſpecial command reared up in the wilderneſs with great ſolemnity, in the firſt month of the ſecond year, after the choſen tribes began their peregrination in the Arabian deſerts. When all the furniture was prepared and arranged according to divine appointment, and the ark ſet in its place, the Almighty ſpread his cloudy mantle upon the tabernacle, and the glory of the LORD appeared, with ſuch divine effulgence, that Moſes could not ſtand to miniſter. What a bleſſed token of Heaven's approbation! O that we might feel ſomething of the ſame, upon this preſent occaſion!

This tabernacle was moved by the Hebrews from place to place, for the ſpace of forty-ſix years, they at laſt pitched it in Shiloh, where it remained until nea-

* I am ſupported in this opinion by the indefatigable *Mythologiſt* BANIER, and he by HERODOTUS and LUCIAN.

the death of Joſhua. It was upon a particular occaſion removed to Shechem. It was afterwards placed at Nob for a ſhort time, and from thence it was carried to Gibeon. Here it probably remained until the temple was built; when the ark, and the other ſacred utenſils were removed into that, and the remainder of the tabernacle laid aſide and diſregarded.

Purſuing our ſubject we are now led to mount Moriah, a place famed for ſeveral remarkable interpoſitions of divine providence. Here, Abraham erected an altar and bound his Son and laid him upon it. His arm was extended with the ſacraficial knife, in order to give the fatal ſtroke, when the Angel of the LORD called to him out of heaven, "Abraham, Abraham! lay not thine hand upon the lad: neither do any thing unto him; for now I know that thou feareſt God." It was here, that David beheld the Deſtroying Angel which had carried peſtilence and death through the land, with his ſword ſtretched over Jeruſalem ready to deſtroy it. Here, GOD accepted his ſacrifice and gave the high command, that the ſword ſhould be ſheathed, and the City ſpared. Here, David determined that the houſe of GOD ſhould be built, and that this ſhould be the altar of burnt offering for Iſrael in future. Accordingly, on this ſpot Solomon erected the temple, which was one of the moſt ſplendid magnificent buildings which the world had ever ſeen. It was juſtly conſidered as the glory of the Hebrew Nation, and the admiration of foreigners.

This Temple was opened and dedicated, with the utmoſt pomp and ſolemnity. King Solomon himſelf officiated upon the occaſion, and in the audience of all the choſen tribes, offered up one of the moſt ſolemn, appropriate, and impreſſive prayers, perhaps ever delivered by man. "When he had made an end of praying, the fire came down and conſumed the burnt offering and the ſacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the houſe ſo that the prieſts could not enter in!" Amazing condeſcenſion! How wonderful the love and goodneſs of GOD? What conſoling! What unequivocal tokens of divine approbation! Well might they aſk, "Will GOD in very deed dwell with men?" It was impoſſible but that the ſaints ſhould rejoice in his goodneſs.

King Solomon offered upon this occaſion twenty-two thouſand oxen, and one hundered and twenty thouſand ſheep, and all Iſrael from the entering in of Hamath to the river of Egypt, a very great congregation, kept a ſolemn feaſt to the LORD ſeven days. The Prieſts waited on their offices, and the Levites with inſtruments of muſic which David had made to praiſe the LORD, becauſe his mercy endureth forever. After the ſolemnities were ended, Solomon ſent the people away unto their tents, rejoicing in the goodneſs of the LORD to his people.

The paſſage choſen for our preſent meditation, is taken from the concluding part of this excellent and comprehenſive prayer.

The text contains three important petitions; each corresponding, I conceive, with our wiſhes and feelings, upon the preſent occaſion.

We will now proceed to conſider them, in the order in which they are placed before us in the text.

1. The eternal GOD is ſolemnly addreſſed, to vouchſafe his conſtant gracious preſence in the houſe now built to the honour of his great name. All the monuments of idolatry which were ever deviſed by the ingenuity of man, were only deſigned to feign that to be preſent, which the ſtupid worſhipper believed to be really abſent. Our religion will appear equally abſurd, unleſs we conſider GOD preſent with us. Our prayers and praiſes muſt be an unmeaning ſervice upon any other ſuppoſition.

But the Petition means more than the acknowledgement of the Omnipreſence of GOD. It deſires his ſpecial approving preſence, by which he communicates his love and goodneſs to his people.

We know of nothing on earth, which bears a greater reſemblance of heaven, than a ſolemn, devout, religious, aſſembly, worſhiping in the fear of GOD, and bleſſed with ſpecial tokens of the divine preſence. This is indeed a little heaven upon earth! and the heaven which we hope for in the world of glory, will be ultimately the ſame.

A conſciouſneſs of the divine preſence, inſpires the ſoul with the ſublimeſt ſentiments, of the infinite purity and holineſs of GOD. It raiſes in us a juſt

deteſtation of ſin. It engages all our immortal powers in the moſt delightful acts of adoration and praiſe. When GOD is pleaſed to favour us with his gracious preſence in the ſanctuary, we enter into the feelings and adopt the language of the young ſon of Iſaac, when wandering lonely through the wilderneſs of Beerſheba to Padanaram. "*Surely, ſaid he,* GOD *is in this place and I knew it not! This is none other but the houſe of* GOD! *this is the gate of heaven!*" The ſoul, that is favoured with the divine preſence, enjoys a heaven let him be where he may: even if ſeparated from friends in a dreary defert.

With what ſacred eloquence does the pious Pſalmiſt, expreſs his delight in the ſanctuary and ordinances of God? "How amiable are thy tabernacles O LORD of hoſts. My ſoul longeth; yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my fleſh cry out for the living GOD.—Bleſſed are they that dwell in thy houſe, they will be ſtill praiſing thee."

It is undoubtedly the deſire of every devout worſhipper when he repairs to the ſanctuary, to meet his GOD, and to enjoy communion with him. What encouragement you have my dear brethren, to hope, that the bleſſed JESUS will meet with you, when you call to mind his gracious declaration; "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midſt of them." It is alſo ſaid that "The LORD loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwelling-places of Jacob."

His mercy never overlooks the humble ſoul, who worſhips in ſecret where no eye ſees, but GOD alone. Nor is he leſs pleaſed with the morning and evening ſacrifice of the pious houſe when they aſſemble around the family altar;

"But makes a more delightful ſtay,
Where churches meet to praiſe and pray."

Although the Moſt High dwelleth not excluſively in temples made with hands, yet he has graciouſly ſaid, "In all places where I record my name there will I come unto thee, and bleſs thee." O that it may be ſaid of this houſe, as Ezekiel ſaid of the City he had been deſcribing, "and the name of it ſhall be from this day, THE LORD IS HERE."

If Chriſtians are exhorted not to neglect the aſſembling of themſelves together, it is certainly neceſſary that they ſhould have a ſuitable place to aſſemble in. It muſt ever be conſidered as a mark of irreligious indifferency, when a people neglect to build and keep in decent repair a houſe for the worſhip of GOD. When ſuch a deſign is on foot, there are often thoſe who ſpeak in the language of diſcouragement like the ancient Jews; "The time is not come, ſay they, the time that the LORD's houſe ſhould be built." But mark, my hearers, the reply which GOD made by the prophet, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houſes and this houſe lie waſte? Now therefore thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts conſider your ways. Ye have ſown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with

drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, putteth them into a bag with holes. Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, conſider your ways: Go up to the mountain and bring wood, and build the houſe; and I will take pleaſure in it, and I will be glorified, ſaith the LORD."* Can you not my brethren this day reply? "LORD, it is done as thou haſt commanded." "Ariſe therefore O LORD GOD into thy reſting-place, thou and the Ark of thy ſtrength." The latter branch of this petition now invites your attention.

The Ark was one of the moſt ſignificant articles of the ceremonial diſpenſation; and was highly typical of the divine Saviour. The Jews revered it as connected with the divinity, and their enemies trembled at its approach on the ſame account. Its importance demands a more particular deſcription.—

We obſerve in its materials two qualities diſtinct in their nature; the one periſhable, the other not ſo. It was made of a very precious wood and overlaid with gold; repreſenting as we conceive the humane and divine nature of JESUS CHRIST. The Mercy-ſeat, over which the Shekinah, or ſymbol of the divine preſence was ſeen, was made of pure gold. This ſerved as the lid or covering of the Ark. It was two cubits and a half long, and a cubit and a half broad. On each end of the mercy-ſeat there was a Cherub with its wings extended, meeting each other over the center of the Mercy-ſeat. Each of their faces were

* Hag. i. 2——8.

inclined inwards, looking down upon the Ark. Does not this very ſtrikingly repreſent the great myſtery of Redemption, which the angels deſire to look into? and does not this mercy-ſeat naturally conduct our thoughts to the throne of grace, to which we are invited to come boldly to obtain mercy to help in every time of need.

After Moſes had broken the two firſt tables of the law, the ſecond, inſcribed by the finger of GOD, were depoſited and kept in the Ark. The law was broken by the firſt Adam, but the ſecond ſaid, "Lo I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O GOD." "Thy law is in my heart." Here it was preſerved intire.

The golden pot, which contained the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, were either in, or by the Ark. Did not this manna repreſent the life ſuſtaining Saviour? "I am, ſaith he, the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderneſs and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven." This is the "hidden manna," which none ever did, nor ever can taſte, but ſuch as receive the "white ſtone and new name."

Aaron's bloſſoming rod, gave a viſible proof to the Congregation, that GOD had choſen and ſeparated him from his brethren, to miniſter before the LORD in the prieſts office, and that he had not run without being called. CHRIST is the ROD which ſprung

from the *ſtem* of Jeſſe,* which at that time looked as unlikely to bring forth a Saviour, as Aaron's dry rod did to bud and bloſſom and bring forth almonds. We may alſo obſerve, that it is the Rod of CHRIST's ſtrength ſent out of Zion,† which diſtinguiſhes his true miniſters from thoſe who are not ſent by him.

The Ark, in our text is called *the Ark of* GOD's *ſtrength:* And has he not made the man of his right-hand ſtrong for himſelf? "Behold ſaith he, I have laid help on ONE who is mighty. ONE who is able to ſave even to the uttermoſt. Yea on one whom the prophet ſtiles "the MIGHTY GOD."

The uſe of the Ark was alſo typical. It was carried by the prieſts into the midſt of Jordan, in order to open a paſſage for the choſen tribes into the land of promiſe: And has not JESUS our great High Prieſt paſſed through the Jordan of death, and opened a way for all his ranſomed people to the heavenly Canaan? The Ark is ſaid to have gone before the children of Iſrael to ſeek them out a reſting-place: And did not the bleſſed JESUS ſay "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myſelf, that where I am there you may be alſo."

We further obſerve; the Ark was made uſe of to ſubdue and humble the enemies of the GOD of Iſrael. The proud walls of Jericho fell before it; ſo the loftineſs of man is brought down by the preaching of the Croſs. Falſe religion has fallen before the

*Iſa. xi. 1. † Pſa. cx. 2

light of gospel truth in many instances, as Dagan did before the Ark.

We add once more; the return of the Ark to the city of David after it had been long absent, caused great joy. So in like manner, when the blessed Jesus returns to his people by the influence of his spirit, and revives his work in the hearts of his contrite ones, and gathers precious souls to his arms, they rejoice with exceeding gladness.

Upon the whole, the petition under consideration, pleads, that as God usually manifested himself over the mercy-seat which covered the Ark, that he would now look on the face of his anointed, and bless his people in Christ Jesus, with the gracious tokens of his love, whenever they should meet in his house: And if we sincerely love him, and keep his commandments he will not deny us his presence. "If any man love me said Jesus he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him."

But I hasten to the Second *petition* in the text.

"*Let thy priests O* Lord God, *be clothed with salvation.*" Although no particular order of men under the gospel dispensation, are distinguished by the appellation of priests; yet the office of Elders, Pastors, and Teachers, corresponds in some degree to that office under the law; as both were appointed by God to minister in holy things, to explain the sacred Oracles, and instruct the people in the solemn duties of religion. We shall therefore accommodate the petition

to the miniſters of the goſpel diſpenſation, and explain the ſubject in this light.

And firſt; to clothe ſignifies to cover and adorn. The ſacred ſcriptures repreſent all mankind while in their natural ſtate, as in a naked forlorn condition, deſtitute of a righteouſneſs which can hide their moral pollution. How very unfit muſt any one appear, who ſhould engage in the great work of preaching the goſpel to others, who had never felt its influence upon his own heart; or who ſhould attempt to convince his hearers, that they will be expoſed to ſhame and condemnation in the great day of accounts, unleſs clothed with the righteouſneſs of CHRIST, and yet himſelf deſtitute of it.

The prieſts under the law were clothed and adorned in a pecular manner by GOD's appointment. Their clothing and ornaments were no doubt typical of the righteouſneſs of CHRIST, and the graces of the HOLY SPIRIT, with which every true miniſter is adorned.

But *Secondly.* To clothe, may alſo ſignify to *inveſt with authority.* Therefore to be clothed with ſalvation, ſuppoſes, that as Miniſters of CHRIST, they are ſent in his name, and by his authority to publiſh ſalvation to a guilty world.

This ſentiment, correſponds with the great Commiſſion given by our LORD to his diſciples in the miniſtry, when he ſent them out to evangelize the nations. "Go ye, ſaid he, into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature; (that is to all the ſinful race of Adam.) He that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved; he that believeth not ſhall be damned."

That the primitive miniſters of the goſpel were clothed with ſalvation, we have the fulleſt teſtimony of all who heard them. The Damſel at Phillippi, poſſeſſed with a ſpirit of divination, hearing Paul and Silas pray, had her attention ſo arreſted that ſhe followed them many days, crying as ſhe went; "Theſe men are the ſervants of the MOST HIGH GOD, which ſhew unto us the way of *ſalvation.*" Such was the conviction of one who had not yet renounced the ſervice of Satan.

Thoſe who love the truth as it is in JESUS, will always love them who are ſent by him to bear the joyful news of ſalvation. Hence, the Prophet Iſaiah looking forward to the dawning of the goſpel day, breaks out in the following joyful ſtrains; "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publiſheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publiſheth *ſalvation*; that ſayeth unto Zion, thy GOD reigneth."

All the important bleſſings of time and eternity, are connected with this ſalvation. No wonder then that the ſaints ſhould pray, that thoſe who come to them in the name of the LORD ſhould be clothed with it. If it were only a ſalvation from ſome temporal evil, it would be deſirable; but it magnifies it to an infinite degree, when we conſider that it ſaves the ſoul from ſin here, and from everlaſting puniſhment hereafter.

Thoſe who are really clothed with this ſalvation, feel the moſt tender concern for their dear fellow-

men, that they alſo may be made partakers of it. They know that the impenitent ſinner who neglects it, ſhall not eſcape. They can ſay with the holy Apoſtle of the Gentiles, "I endure all things for the elect's ſake, that they may obtain the *ſalvation* which is in JESUS CHRIST, with eternal glory."

The great end of all the inſtitutions of religion, is to promote the glory of God in the ſalvation of his people. And may I not addreſs you my dear hearers to day as Paul did his audience at Antioch in Piſidia. "Men and brethren, children of the ſtock of Abraham and whoſoever among you feareth GOD, unto you is the word of this *ſalvation* ſent."

Does GOD indeed clothe his Miniſters with ſalvation, and ſend them in his name to proclaim it to you? And can you; nay, dare you neglect it? How can you expect to eſcape if you ſlight ſuch amazing love? How aggravated muſt your condemnation be, if you continue to trifle with the overtures of mercy, and go down to everlaſting ruin with the ſound of ſalvation ringing in your ears!——"But beloved, we hope better things of you, and things which accompany ſalvation though we thus ſpeak."

We proceed now to the THIRD, and laſt Petition in the text; "*and let thy ſaints rejoice in goodneſs.*"

Goodneſs is one of the diſtinguiſhing attributes of Deity. Were it poſſible to conceive of a Supreme Ruler without it, the thought would fill the mind with terror and dread. But could never inſpire, either confidence or love.

When Moſes beſought the LORD to ſhew him his glory; he was anſwered; I will make all my *goodneſs* to paſs before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD—*&c.* If this is to be taken as an anſwer to the requeſt of Moſes, it leads us to this concluſion; that the *goodneſs*, or *benevolence* of GOD, conſtitutes the chief glory of the divine character.

This goodneſs is ſtamped upon the broad face of creation, and diffuſed throughout the globe.—It ſhines in the Sun; it falls in the ſhowers; and diſtils in the gentle dews. We enjoy it every day, in every thing. We inhale it in the fragrancy of Spring; we taſte it in the delicious fruits of Summer; and we enjoy it in the ſubſtantial bleſſings of Autumn. In the fine language of inſpiration we exclaim, "Thou crowneſt the year with thy goodneſs, and thy paths drop fatneſs."

This bleſſing is excluded from no part of the univerſe; the dark world of hell excepted. There, goodneſs never extends its cheering conſolations, nor hope ſheds a ſingle ray of comfort;

"But darkneſs, death, and long deſpair,
Reign in eternal ſilence there."

Various are the bleſſings with which we are ſurrounded; yet every good, and every perfect gift, comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableneſs or ſhadow of change! If we enjoy health, or friends, or proſperity in this world, we owe all to the goodneſs of GOD. If he ſees fit to deny us the bounties of his providence, we are

ſtreightened on every ſide and perplexed with want. But if he ſmiles upon us and bleſſes us in our baſket and ſtore, we are enabled to anſwer the various calls of domeſtic duty, and devote a part to aid the important intereſts of religion.

In the immenſe preparations which David made towards building the temple, he conſidered all as coming from the munificent hand of GOD. He ſeems to be overwhelmed with grateful aſtoniſhment, in reflecting upon what he had done. "Who am I, ſaid he, and what is my people, that we ſhould be able to offer ſo willingly after this ſort; for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." David did not conſider the Almighty much indebted to him after all. He had only been indulged the pleaſure of giving back a ſmall part of what GOD had beſtowed upon him.

Nothing can be more calculated, to draw forth the grateful affections of the pious ſoul, than to reflect ſeriouſly upon the goodneſs and mercy of GOD. The thought of this, ſoftens the heart of marble; and obduracy itſelf is ſometimes ſeen to relent. The impious wretch who laughs at the thunders of Sinai and whoſe conduct defies omnipotent power, is eaſily diſſolved and ſubdued by the influence of divine mercy.

But the goodneſs mentioned in the text, is to be underſtood more eſpecially of a ſpiritual nature. It refers undoubtedly to thoſe gracious communications, which GOD is pleaſed to make of himſelf to his people, from time to time in his ſanctuary.

Let thy ſaints rejoice in goodneſs; that is in the goodneſs of thine houſe.—In ſeeing and hearing of the proſperity of Zion. In ſeeing the ſinking church ariſe from her ruins; the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom enlarged, and the everlaſting goſpel extending its influence from ſea to ſea, and from land to land.

What rich experience have the ſaints in all ages had, in waiting upon GOD in his holy temple. Here they have had their doubts removed, their fears quelled, and their hopes ſtrengthened and confirmed. How very perplexing was the ſtate of *Aſaph*, while reflecting upon the proſperity of the wicked. His feet had well nigh ſlipped; for he began to call in queſtion the reality of religion, and was in doubt whether the wicked were not upon the whole happier than the righteous. In vain did he urge the philoſophy of the world to remove his doubts, all was myſterious, "until he went into the ſanctuary of GOD." Here the vail was withdrawn, and light divine broke in upon his ſoul. "Then ſaid he, underſtood I their end. Surely thou didſt ſet them in ſlippery places; thou caſteſt them down into deſtruction." He ſaw them hurled from the pinnacle of their immaginary happineſs, "and plunged into deſolation as in a moment." Well *Aſaph*, have you any thoughts of giving up your religion now? or can you any longer envy the proſperity of the wicked? Do I not hear him anſwer (O no; I have had a glimpſe of the great day of retribution, and am

convinced that all "they who are far from God ſhall periſh;" let their worldly circumſtances be as they may. I tremble to think of the precipice I ſo lately ſtood upon! But I have learnt this much by the trial, "that it is good for me to draw near to God. I have put my truſt in the Lord God, that I ſhould declare all his works."

Again, how do the ſaints rejoice in goodneſs, when ſetting under the ſound of the bleſſed goſpel, and enjoying its precious Ordinances; eſpecially when permitted to come around the ſacred board of their Crucified Lord. When Christ makes himſelf known to them in the breaking of bread. When he addreſſes them in the language of his love. "Eat O friends, drink O beloved, yea, drink abundantly." Here indeed they are indulged with a "feaſt of fat things; of wines on the lees, well refined."

The bleſſings of public ſocial worſhip are incalculable. The intereſts of morality and piety depend eſſentially upon it. Where the inſtitutions of religion are diſregarded, and the public worſhip of God neglected; you will generally find, that vice immorality, and a univerſal depravity of manners prevail. But by uniting in acts of ſocial worſhip, we animate each other in the race of virtue, and kindle the decaying ſparks of piety in our breaſts into a generous flame. "As iron ſharpeneth iron, ſo a man ſharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

You are not ſtrangers, my Brethren, to David's feelings when he ſaid, "I was glad when they ſaid unto

me let us go into the houſe of the LORD. Our feet ſhall ſtand within thy gates, O Jeruſalem." "Bleſſed is the man whom thou chooſeſt, and cauſeſt to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we ſhall be ſatisfied with the *goodneſs* of thy houſe, even of thy holy temple." The heart of this good man was ſo intenſely placed upon the worſhip of God in his houſe, that he preferred it above his chief earthly joy. The ſplendors of a throne, and the pleaſures of a royal court, were all ſunk and abſorbed in the pleaſures of the temple. "One thing ſaid he have I deſired of the LORD, that will I ſeek after." David, we feel anxious to know what that good is, which thine heart is thus ſet upon? Is it to fill thy coffers with the fine gold of *Opher*, that peculiar treaſure of kings? no, is it to enlarge the boundaries of thy kingdom, and thus extend thy power and prerogatives? no, is it the deſtruction of all thine enemies and the undiſturbed enjoyment of thy throne to thyſelf and poſterity? no;—It is ſimply this, "that I may dwell in the houſe of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple." Happy man! How privileged above the common fate of kings!

I might dwell upon this delightful theme much longer, but I ſhould then have to break off in the midſt of my ſubject; for it will never come to a cloſe. It is as immenſe as the nature of GOD, and will continue to flow through eternal duration. "O that men would praiſe the LORD for his *goodneſs*, and for his

wonderful works to the children of men! for he satisfieth the longing ſoul, and filleth the hungry ſoul with goodneſs."

We paſs now to ſome improvement of the ſubject; from which we learn, 1ſt. That the cuſtom of building and dedicating places for the public worſhip of GOD, is ſanctioned by the divine approbation, and encouraged by examples the moſt ancient and honourable.

You have then my Chriſtian Friends trod on ſafe ground, in your preſent undertaking. We truſt that "nothing has been done through ſtrife or vain glory." But that a regard to the honour of GOD, and a laudable deſire to maintain the religion of your venerable anceſtors, have influenced your conduct. We moſt cordially approve of the honourable exertions you have made, and from our hearts wiſh you abundant bleſſings in this houſe of the LORD. We hope, that many others admoniſhed by your conduct, may emulate your examples; and "go and do likewiſe."

When David firſt conceived the deſign of building a temple for the GOD of Iſrael, he was ſtruck with this thought; "I dwell, ſaid he, in an houſe of cedar; but the Ark of God dwelleth within *curtains*." As if he had ſaid "I bluſh for my paſt neglect! Call for the prophet Nathan, that I may learn the will of GOD in this matter:"—And although not permitted to build the houſe as he had deſigned, inaſmuch as he had ſhed blood; yet he was indulged the pleaſure of making ample proviſion for it. But what ſhall we think of the religion of a people, who have no ſuch

reſtriction, nor even a plea of inability to offer; and yet let the houſe of God lie waſte; its covering tattered and torn by the winds; its windows broken; its doors ſtanding open, yet ſeldom frequented, unleſs by the fleecy inhabitants of the Common, who may occaſionally take ſhelter in it from the rays of the ſcorching ſun? Surely we ſhall think their love to Christ is at a very low ebb.

What a happy contraſt now meets our eyes. Will not the pious Traveller as he paſſes this way point to this beautiful houſe and ſay; "Here, is another noble monument erected to the honour of Chriſtianity." Will he not breathe his deſires to God, that it may remain a firm bulwark againſt the depredations of infidelity, and that bleſſing immortal may deſcend on the people who worſhip here?

But 2dly. Our ſubject teacheth us, That the moſt ſplendid temple which human art can erect, will lack its chief glory, until God is pleaſed to manifeſt his preſence in it, and make it the fixed abode of his word and ordinances. It is the manifeſtative preſence of God in his temple, which renders it the delightful reſort of his ſaints and people. Not the eloquence of the preacher, nor the ſacred ſongs of Zion can ſatisfy the pious worſhipper, if the preſence of God be not realized. The language of the Chriſtian is like that of Moſes; "If thy preſence go not with us, carry us not up hence." It is the thought of meeting God in his temple, which animates the humble believer to overcome the difficulties which obſtruſt his way thither.

How often has the mourning Chriſtian who went ſorrowing to meeting, returned rejoicing home. The language of his heart now is, "Bleſſed be God, who hath made us to ſet together in heavenly places in CHRIST JESUS." He feels a ſweet ſavor of divine things upon his ſoul, and can truly ſay,

"One day amidſt the place
Where my dear GOD hath been,
Is ſweeter than ten thouſand days
Of pleaſurable ſin."
"In ſuch ſociety as this
My weary ſoul would reſt,
The man who dwells where JESUS is
Muſt be forever bleſt." *Watts.*

If the preſence of GOD in his ſanctuary is ſo deſirable, ſhall we not my Chriſtian friends with one heart adopt the language of our text; "Now therefore, ariſe O LORD GOD into thy reſting-place, thou and the Ark of thy ſtrength." O that it would pleaſe GOD to grant this anſwer to the petition, "This is my reſt forever; here will I dwell; for I have deſired it. I will abundantly bleſs her proviſion; I will ſatisfy her poor with bread; I will clothe her prieſts with ſalvation, and her ſaints ſhall ſhout aloud for joy."* Even ſo come LORD JESUS, come quickly, with power and great glory. Take up thine abode with this people, and rule and reign in their hearts without a rival.

But 3dly. Our ſubject leads us to enquire, whether ſomething is not yet wanting to complete the

* Pſa. cxxxii. 14.

ſervice of the houſe and ſet it in order?—Yes, my Brethren, you want an aſcenſion gift; a miniſter clothed with ſalvation to go in and out before you, and break to you the bread of life. A paſtor after GOD's own heart, one whom he will delight to own and bleſs. Perhaps you readily aſſent to this, and enquire, "What ſteps are to be taken, and how are we to obtain ſuch a one?" I would not preſume to dictate, but with modeſty give my opinion. In the firſt place no doubt you ought to look to the great Head of the Church, the LORD of the harveſt, who alone can furniſh faithful labourers. Perhaps if you were to ſet apart a ſeaſon for faſting and prayer, you would not find it a loſt opportunity. But Brethren, you muſt not only pray, but alſo take other ſuitable meaſures to obtain a public gift. We do not wiſh you to act precipitately; nor will we entertain a doubt, but that you wiſh to have the goſpel reſettled among you, as ſoon as you can find a character in whom you can all unite.

Your ſituation appears truly inviting; but are there not ſome obſtacles in the way? Will you indulge me the freedom which Paul took with the Corinthians? "I hear ſaid he, that there are diviſions among you, and I partly believe it."* If this be in fact your caſe, you will apply his exhortation to yourſelves. "Now I beſeech you Brethren, by the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that ye all ſpeak the ſame thing, and that there be no diviſions among you;

* 1 Cor. xi. 18.

but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."*

But do I not mistake? Can it be that the dear children of GOD should ever for a single moment feel their affections alienated one from another? Can those who have often gone in company to the house of GOD, and enjoyed sweet communion together in his holy ordinances, suffer any trifling occurrence to separate them; and yet remain content? Surely this cannot be the case, unless your love is waxen cold.

Could we admit the thought, that the spirits of the just made perfect still feel an interest in the affairs of mortals; I should suppose that the venerable *Shale* of *Alden* was this moment hovering around this crowded Assembly; pleased to see this temple dedicated to the honour of his divine Master; and devoutly wishing that the glory of this second house may be greater than the first, by being more honoured with the presence of the LORD MESSIAH. But would it not damp his joy for a moment, though in the mansions of bliss, to perceive that any unhappy division among you should seem to impede the progress of truth. Were he permitted to address you from the invisible world, would he not say, "*My little children, for whom I travailed in birth that* CHRIST *might be formed in you the hope of glory. Though separa-*

* 1 Cor. i. 10.—The difference of opinion among the Members of this Church, on some particular points, has not been occasioned by the building of this house; but has arisen from other causes.

ed from you by the vale of death, I have not ceaſed to care for you. See that you fall not out by the way. Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and evil ſpeaking be put away; and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD *for* CHRIST's *ſake hath forgiven you." Live in love and peace, and the* GOD *of peace ſhall dwell with you. Then ſhall I rejoice in the day of the* LORD, *that I did not run in vain, nor labour in vain; but ye ſhall be my joy and crown of rejoicing.*" Remember, though "dead, he yet ſpeaketh."

Is it not the indiſpenſable duty of thoſe who love our LORD JESUS CHRIST, to endeavour to maintain the unity of the ſpirit in the bonds of peace? "Behold, how good and how pleaſant it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity!" Pleaſant indeed. It diffuſes a delightful fragrancy, like the holy anointing oil, that was poured on the head of Aaron, which run down upon the beard, yea, down to the very ſkirts of his garments, overſpreading the whole man! Its influence gentle and refreſhing, as the dews of the ſummer evenings, which deſcended upon the mountains of Zion! Where this is indeed the caſe, we may always hope that "the LORD will command his bleſſing even life forevermore."

But I fear I have already intruded on your patience. A few words of addreſs muſt therefore cloſe the ſubject.

Much reſpected Brethren and Friends of this Congregation.

Should we tell you, that the regard which you have ſhewn to the honour of religion in building this houſe, meets our cordial approbation, it would be ſaying little. We truſt you have the approbation of heaven; and that GOD will bleſs this work of your hands. It gives us peculiar pleaſure to find, that you have proceeded with ſo much harmony and peace. We hope you will continue to purſue thoſe things which will eventually make for peace, and which ſhall edify one another.

We ſincerely unite with you in devout aſcriptions of praiſe to the Almighty RULER of the univerſe; whoſe ſovereign pleaſure governs alike all events, from the revolution of an empire, down to the falling of a ſparrow. Under his benign auſpices you have proſpered thus far; and on his divine benediction all your future proſpects depend.

Collected from different places, we cordially unite with you in the worſhip of GOD in this newly erected temple; and by the religious ſervices of this day we *ſolemnly Dedicate* this houſe to the honour of his great name; to be, and remain forever hereafter ſacred to the worſhip of the TRIUNE GOD. Whilſt theſe doors ſhall be cheerfully opened to the faithful miniſters of the goſpel, who preach the truth as it is in JESUS, though of different denominations; may they remain forever cloſed againſt ſuch as "corrupt the word of God," and who cauſe to err from the right way.

To these hallowed courts, my Brethren, you will constantly repair, and esteem it your highest pleasure to worship God in the "beauty of holiness." Here, may you often prostrate yourselves before the mercy-seat, and with humble penitent hearts implore all the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant, both for yourselves and for your children. O that your prayers may come up as a memorial before God, and be offered upon that golden altar, which sanctifieth both the gift and the giver, and maketh the comers thereunto perfect. Here may the precious gospel be statedly preached, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven: And while sinners who feel the arrows of truth shall cry out in distress, "what shall we do to be saved!" May the saints who know the love of Christ, *shout a loud for joy.*

Brethren, our hearts desire and prayer to God is, that you may be saved. That the best of heaven's blessings may descend and rest on you, and on your children; and to your children's children to the latest generations. That God would favour you with his life giving presence, whenever you assemble in this house. O that the son of David would reign here, and hold a lasting undivided throne in each of your hearts. That he may here "see of the travail of his soul," and not only have "the dew of his youth;" but may Hosanna's burst from thousands of *infant tongues*, to him who came to bless them in the name of the Lord.

In concluding my ſubject, this reſpectable audience at large will permit me to addreſs a few words to them, in the plain, but ſincere language of truth.

BELOVED FRIENDS,

Religion is a ſubject which equally concerns us all. To know the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST whom he hath ſent is eternal life. This knowledge is not ſpeculative, but experimental and practical. Do you my hearers know theſe things? Do you love JESUS CHRIST more and better than every other good? Have you the witneſs in yourſelves that CHRIST is precious to you? Can you in ſincerity ſay of the ſaints, "they are the excellent of the earth in whom is all your delight?" Do you love the place where GOD's honour dwelleth? and are you glad when they ſay unto you, "let us go into the houſe of the LORD?" Or are you ſtrangers to theſe things?

It is all-important that you ſhould know the great things of religion for yourſelves, as we muſt as individuals give account to God for all our conduct in this preſent world. If you continue impenitent, how will you bear to meet that Saviour whoſe goſpel you have treated with neglect, and whoſe love and mercy you have ſlighted? Can you bear the thought of living and dying in your ſins, and of being forever ſeparated from the preſence of GOD and the LAMB? O that you would think of theſe things before it is too late.

On the other hand; if you love the bleſſed JESUS, and endeavour to walk in all the "commandments and ordinances of the LORD blameleſs;" then you will take delight in approaching unto GOD. You will ſacredly regard the LORD's day, and honour all the inſtitutions of religion; preferring the proſperity of Zion, above your chief joy. Walking on in obedience to the divine commands, you will find "wiſdom's ways to be pleaſantneſs, and all her paths peace." If you are of that happy number who "worſhip the FATHER in ſpirit and in truth," and "ſerve GOD in the goſpel of his SON," you may hope after a few more revolving ſuns to meet in the New Jeruſalem above, in that holy happy City which St. John deſcribed, in which he ſays he ſaw no temple; "for THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY *and the* LAMB, are the *Temple* of it." Where all the redeemed millions will finally meet, and ſpend the vaſt round of eternity in admiring and adoring the infinite perfections of JEHOVAH, ſhining in the face of HIM who fills the middle throne. Far removed from this world of ſin and death, you will then unite with all the countleſs myriads which continually ſurround the throne, in aſcribing "*Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the* LAMB *forever and ever.*" GOD grant this to be the happy caſe of us all for CHRIST's ſake; AMEN.